

A rural parish has embraced net zero carbon ambitions by installing four air source heat pumps.



All Saints’s Church, Hethel, Norfolk, has said its heating system can be a “challenge” to others.

The church, which is in a small rural parish, had previously faced heating-related problems and the congregation relied on portable heaters despite its impact on the fabric of the church, high cost, and dependence on fossil fuel.

“Environmental issues have been a part of the PCC life for a decade or more,” Peter Nicholls, from All Saints Church, Hethel, said.

“As churchwarden, and with the support of the entire PCC, I wanted a low-carbon improvement.

“We made our full rationale clear back in 2017 and were given the support of the Diocese to install air source heat pumps.

An air source heat pump takes heat from the air outside a building using it to raise the temperature of a fluid via an electric powered compressor.

That warmed-up fluid is then pumped into the building’s fan units which can take less than 45 minutes to warm up the air in the church to a temperature in the high teens.

All Saints’s electricity comes from renewable energy sources. The carbon impact of the heating system is therefore neutral for the parish and costs around £3 an hour.

With a total cost of £13,500 (excluding VAT which was later reclaimed), the parish were supported by the British Airways Carbon Fund which met a third of the cost.

“In terms of installation costs, we think it compares very favourably with any alternative system, electrical or otherwise,” Peter said.

“We have no regrets. I absolutely recommend other small churches follow our lead. Do the homework, weigh up the alternatives rigorously, and be driven by the key principle of low-carbon.”

The church now represents a “challenge” to its local community. Peter said: “You can't preach credibly what you're not practising.”

The Church of England, following a motion from the General Synod in 2020, is aiming to be net zero carbon by 2030. The [Routemap to Net Zero Carbon](#) will be finalised and voted on by General Synod in the summer of 2022.

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